



Dear Teacher,

It is once again time for the volunteers and staff of Sutter's Fort State Historic Park to bring "Sutter's Fort Mobile Living History" aka "Trapper's Camp" to a wilderness near you! During our Living History interpretation you and your class will be transported back in time to a fur trapping camp along the Sacramento River in the 1840s. Your class will get to experience four stations that make up the complex operations and social interactions of the camp and the Natives and we will share and demonstrate the history and material culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century --- including the firing of a cannon!

At the **Traders Tent** the class will represent a Native family group (tribe) and appoint a **Group Leader** to negotiate the hunting rights with the visiting trappers. The Group Leader is representative of the **Big Man** or **Chief** who was important in the culture of Central Valley Indians. The other students will help the Big Man decide which items are good trades and which are not. Students will learn about the short term benefit and longer term deleterious impact of trading with the trappers. At the **Hunter's Tent** and the **Camp Keepers** area the class will learn the many challenges faced in keeping a large encampment of trappers fed and healthy in the wilderness. At this station we also examine the role of women on the frontier and the difficulties of maintaining a home in the wilderness. Students learn what native plants could be used and what had to be carried from the Fort. Finally, at the **Trapper's Tent** the class will learn just what brought this group to the wilds of California. Students will get to handle furs and learn why we no longer have to trap animals.

These presentations will demonstrate many aspects of the human history, natural history, and social and material cultures of the Sacramento Valley in the 1840s (a nature walk is part of the experience at Red Bluff). Many in our younger generations do not understand how different life and customs were before automobiles and television. To bridge this gap in language and culture we take the time to have a question and answer period and explain it all at the end of the program. The entire presentation takes 2 hours. The fee for the program is \$4.00 for each person. The teacher is free.

This year we will be encamped at Red Bluff from Tuesday September 30<sup>th</sup> until Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014. We will then move our camp to Colusa from Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup> until Friday October 10<sup>th</sup>. We will also have plenty of wilderness souvenirs available at the on-site gift shop at both locations for groups who are interested.

If you are interested in having your class participate in this North Valley tradition and experience of a lifetime, please visit our website at [www.parks.ca.gov/suttersfort](http://www.parks.ca.gov/suttersfort). On the right side of the page you will find a River Trip Program link. At the link you will find an information sheet and the River Trip Application. Or, contact Program Lead Steve Beck at [steve.beck@parks.ca.gov](mailto:steve.beck@parks.ca.gov) or by phone 916 323-8112.





Program Coordinator  
Sutter's Fort State Historic Park

### **Sutter's Fort Mobile Living History (aka –Trapper's Camp) Synopsis**

Prepared by Steve Beck, Educational Programming Lead SFSHP

Once again Sutter's Fort Mobile Living History (aka Trapper's Camp) will be bringing high quality hands-on historical interpretation of the exciting and romantic age of the fur trappers to Northern California schools and communities. For one week in Red Bluff (9/30 – 10/3) and one week in Colusa (10/7 – 10/10) the volunteers of Sutter's Fort State Historic Park will set-up campsites that replicate the camps of trapping brigades that John Sutter sent into the wilderness of the upper Sacramento Valley to make treaties with the Native Indians and harvest the rich fur and pelt populations of the Sacramento River and its tributaries. For a nominal fee of \$4/person, families and schools may visit the campsites for a two hour experience to learn and share in the lives of the trappers and their wives. **Private schools and smaller groups are encouraged to sign-up for afternoon sessions, as they are less crowded.** Because of bus transportation issues, public schools can usually only sign-up for the morning rotations (call for details). **Everyone who visits the trapping camps will be rewarded with a free gift.** However, an on-site gift shop will be available with a variety of merchandise.

In 1983 a few volunteers from Sutter's Fort became enamored with the lives of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century trappers. The volunteers wanted to see how closely they could live like real trappers. In the yard of Sutter's Fort they built their dugout canoes from native trees, hauled the canoes to the river, and launched their journey north. Newspapers wrote stories of the trapper's adventure and at each stop more and more people came to the trapper's camp to see them and how they lived. It didn't take the volunteers long to realize that the moving trapper's camp was a wonderful way to bring the educational programming of Sutter's Fort to schools and families that might not be able to take a field trip to the Fort. And, Sutter's Fort Mobile Living History (aka River Trip) was born.

The number of volunteers participating and the quantity of equipment used for visitor activities long ago outgrew the dugout canoes. It now requires a large moving van and several people all day to set-up camp in the two locations. Each location has easy access and ample parking to accommodate the more than 2,000 students and families that attend River Trip each year. The Mobile Living History is now a cooperative effort of California State Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, and the City of Colusa.

If you would like more information about becoming a part of this amazing experience, please contact **Steve Beck (916 323-8112)** ([steve.beck@parks.ca.gov](mailto:steve.beck@parks.ca.gov)) or visit the Sutter's Fort web page ([www.parks.ca.gov/suttersfort](http://www.parks.ca.gov/suttersfort)) or ([www.suttersfort.org](http://www.suttersfort.org)).

